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Submission: Term of Parliament (Enabling a Four-Year Term) Legislation Amendment Bill

The Waikato District Council (WDC) welcomes the opportunity to submit on the Term of Parliament (Enabling a Four-Year Term) Legislation Amendment Bill.

WDC understands that the intent of the Bill is to extend the parliamentary term from three to four years if the government of the day initiates greater checks and balances by ensuring that the make-up of select committees was made proportionate to the number of non-Executive members of Parliament (any Member of Parliament that is not a minister, associate minister, or under-secretary).

Whilst WDC is supportive of four-year parliamentary terms we are concerned that the Bill is making a four-year parliamentary term conditional rather than mandatory. The risk is that should a government choose not to have the required select committee representation checks and balances in place, the parliamentary term will revert to three years. This will create inconsistency which will not only be a challenge for good lawmaking, but it will also render the central government term always being uncoordinated with that of local government.

WDC therefore recommends that four-year parliamentary terms are not conditional but mandatory with the required non-Executive Members of Parliament representation on select committees always in place. Doing this will enable a more effective bipartisan and a robust approach to lawmaking on a consistent basis. A four-year term will help provide greater stability in political cycles and enable a longer focus on policy delivery as opposed to a three-year term. We also recommend that consideration be given to bipartisan (cross-party) accords on key government policy affecting local government to ensure there is continuity and no wastage.

A key purpose of the Bill is to help improve lawmaking but 'improving' lawmaking should be the responsibility of *any* government's term rather than this being at the behest of a newly installed government choosing whether to do this through non-Executive Members of Parliament representation on select committees.

To address a scenario where the term of central government and that of local government is out-of-sync with regards to central government policymaking and local government implementation, we recommend that the Justice Committee consider an amendment to the Local Electoral Act 2001 to change the term of every local authority and community board from three to four years and that local body elections be held the year *after* a general election. This would enable local authorities to start responding to central government's key policy settings the year after it (i.e. central government) has developed these. Government policies (such as the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport) are important for local authorities and ensuring that government releases these in its first year of office (as it general does) will make it easier for local government to respond when the latter commences its term of office a year after the new government is installed.

Mandated four year-terms for both central and local governments will allow more time for both tiers of government to develop, progress and implement well-tested policy and legislation. For councils (such as ours) who have Joint Management Agreements with iwi authorities, four year terms for local government will also support a more enduring partnership between the two entities. Changing the term of local government as well from three to four years will require a review of representation review timelines.

WDC supports the Term of Parliament (Enabling a 4-year Term) Legislation Amendment Bill going to a referendum.

Should the Committee require clarification of the points raised in this submission, or further information, please contact Vishal Ramduny (Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships Manager – Vishal.Ramduny@waidc.govt.nz) in the first instance.

Thank you once again for the opportunity WDC to provide feedback on this bill.

Yours faithfully



Jacqui Church
MAYOR